

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 023349

FOLLOWING REPEAT BRUSSELS 457 ACTION SECSTATE INFO USNMR
SHAPE USCINCEUR USDELMC BONN COPENHAGEN LONDON OSLO PARIS
ROME THE HAGUE NATO DIA 24 JAN

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 0457

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, BEXP, BE

SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER ON REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT FOR
F-104

REF: BRUSSELS 424

1. DURING MY MEETING MORNING OF JANUARY 24 WITH MINISTER
OF DEFENSE VANDEN BOEYNANTS I RAISED WITH HIM THE QUESTION
OF REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT FOR THE F-104. IN DOING SO, I
PRESENTED TO HIM ALL THE ARGUMENTS WE HAVE
PUT FORWARD BEFORE IN SUPPORT OF THE U.S. ENTRANTS INCLUDING
STRESS ON THE JACKSON-NUNN AMENDMENT. VANDEN BOEYNANTS
TOLD ME THE BELGIANS WILL BUY EITHER THE NORTHROP
COBRA OR FRENCH MIRAGE. HE HAD RECENTLY SPENT A DAY
IN SWEDEN WHERE HE HAD BEEN BRIEFED ON THE VIGGEN; BUT, SO
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HE SAID, BELGIUM HAD NO INTENTION OF BUYING THIS PLANE

FROM A COUNTRY WHICH IS NOT A MEMBER OF NATO.

2. ACCORDING TO VANDEN BOEYNANTS HOW THE DECISION WILL EVENTUALLY FALL DEPENDS ON MANY FACTORS (WHICH HE DID NOT ENUMERATE). HE DID NOT THINK ANY DECISION WOULD BE MADE UNTIL SUMMER, FOR THE PRESENT BELGIAN POLITICAL CRISIS WILL DELAY THINGS. VANDEN BOEYNANTS EXPRESSED UNDERSTANDING THAT BELGIUM OCCUPIED KEY POSITION IN CHOICE OF FIGHTER BECAUSE BELGIAN DECISION IS LIKELY TO BE MADE BEFORE OTHER INTERESTED COUNTRIES CAN MAKE THEIRS.

3. ON JACKSON-NUNN VANDEN BOEYNANTS CALLED MY ATTENTION TO BELGIAN DECISION TO BUY THE HAWK-HELIP FOLLOW-ON WITH A VALUE OF SOME 1500 MILLION FRANCS. HE THOUGHT THIS PURCHASE WOULD BE A HELPFUL CONTRIBUTION TO MEETING THE OBJECTIVES OF THE AMENDMENT.

4. ON HIS OWN FUTURE WHICH IS NOT IRRELEVANT TO THE CHOICE OF PLANE, VANDEN BOEYNANTS SAID HE WOULD EXPECT TO BE EITHER MINISTER OF DEFENSE OR RESIDENT ON RUE DE LA LOI. THE FINANCE MINISTRY, THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, AND THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE ARE ON THAT STREET; BUT I HAVE NO INDICATION OF HIS INTEREST IN INTERIOR OR FINANCE.

5. COMMENT: THIS IS THE FIRST RELIABLE INDICATION THAT THE BELGIANS HAVE A PREFERENCE AMONG THE THREE AMERICAN COMPETITORS AND SHOULD BE OF IMPORTANCE IN DECIDING HOW WE PROMOTE THE AMERICAN COMPETITION. I SUGGEST THAT IN FORMULATING FURTHER GUIDANCE FOR THE FIELD, THIS APPARENT PREFERENCE OF BELGIAN MINISTER OF DEFENSE BE KEPT IN MIND. STRAUSS-KHOFI UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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